

Message #18

II Corinthians 6:1-10

How should the precious doctrine of reconciliation affect us? How should the substitutionary work of Jesus Christ and the fact that He was made sin and took the full brunt of the wrath of God and then we actually were given His righteousness, affect our lives?

THE DOCTRINE OF THE SUBSTITUTIONARY SACRIFICE OF JESUS CHRIST IN RECONCILING US TO GOD SHOULD AFFECT WHAT WE COMMUNICATE AND HOW WE LIVE .

The doctrine of God's grace made a profound impact on the Apostle Paul and it should make a profound impact on us. God's grace should penetrate our theology, our communication and our life. There are five ways God's grace affected Paul:

RECONCILIATION AFFECT #1 – We should, like Paul, realize we have the responsibility of working together with God in teaching the doctrine of reconciliation. **6:1a**

Now the text does not say exactly who Paul is working with, but the context clearly teaches us it is God—5:18, 21. Paul was a “co-worker” with God and he was a co-worker with the people of God. All are co-workers together in the work of God. We may have different gifts, but we are all working together with God.

Now many people think it is the job of the pastor or minister to win people to Christ. But Earl Radmacher made an interesting observation when he said the shepherd does not produce sheep; sheep produce sheep. In other words, reaching out to people with the doctrine of reconciliation is all of our business.

RECONCILIATION AFFECT #2 – We should make certain that we have not received the grace of God in vain . **6:1b**

Now contextually what Paul means is that he urged the Corinthians to strive to be a co-worker with God in view of the fact that God had saved them and in grace reconciled them. In fact, the noun “grace” is articular “the grace” and refers to the specific grace Gospel which includes the substitutionary work of Jesus Christ in making reconciliation possible.

Now the aorist tense verb “receive” points back to the moment when many of these Corinthians had believed on Jesus Christ. In the original there is an emphatic pronoun “you,” which refers specifically to the Corinthians.

So the Corinthians had received the grace of God and Paul's fear was they had received it in vain.

Now the way one receives the grace of God in vain, contextually speaking, is twofold:

1) Believe on Jesus Christ and then give in to religious things or concede things that are not the grace of God and put confidence in the flesh; 2) Believe on Jesus Christ and then live life in a disgraceful way.

The fact is this concept of receiving the grace of God in vain has much more to do than with just personal holiness or piety. There must be a grasp of true theology about reconciliation and substitution and believers must not ever waver from this grace doctrine.

Paul's apostleship was under attack in Corinth and religious critics were trying to convince people that the grace Gospel that Paul presented that teaches one may be reconciled to God through faith in Jesus Christ was not enough. They did not grasp the substitutionary value of the death of Christ. Apparently some of the Corinthians had not grasped it either and Paul challenges them that he hoped they had not received God's grace in vain.

RECONCILIATION AFFECT #3 – We have the responsibility to communicate the grace Gospel of reconciliation accurately. **6:2**

The Apostle Paul quotes Isaiah in establishing that God's complete grace program came through Jesus Christ. What Paul is saying is that God worked in him as a fellow worker to bring the grace of God salvific message to the world and specifically to Corinth.

Now the quotation is from Isaiah 49:8 in which God speaks to Isaiah, which predicts a complete restoration of the nation Israel. Paul is using this quote to say individuals now may have complete restoration in their relationship with God. Any person who calls out to the Lord to be saved will be saved. This is the acceptable time and God will save and help any individual sinner right now. It is our job to communicate that point. Once this Grace Age is over, things will not work like this.

Paul wanted these Corinthians to realize that in view of the amazing package of God's grace, which they had received, they had responsibilities to live for God and defend the grace of God.

RECONCILIATION AFFECT #4 – We have the responsibility to cause no offense so that the ministry will not be discredited . **6:3**

Now we need to understand what Paul is saying here. Truth is the Gospel is an offense to the pride and arrogance of man (I Cor. 1:23). Truth is if you stand for truth you will at times be an offense to people. If you take a stand for Jesus Christ against the Muslims or Mormons or any other false religion, you will not be voted preacher of the year. So this point is not about not ever hurting someone's feelings. Fact is if you speak truth, you will hurt feelings. **This is about not doing things that could discredit the ministry.**

One of the arguments you often hear against Christianity and the Church is that there are many hypocrites, which in fact in some cases is true. Many people love to blame ministers for their inconsistencies and point their fingers at people who are inconsistent in their behavior.

Now Paul was not a sinless man. In fact, he would be the first to say that he was not perfect. But what Paul did was to live his life in a way that would not bring any reproach to the ministry God had given to him.

The word “offense” (προσκοπη) means that Paul lived his life in a way that would not cause people to stumble. He did not want the ministry discredited. That word “discredit” (μωμος) means that Paul governed his life in such a way that he did not bring disgrace and blemish to the ministry (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 298).

We need to do our best to be very careful about our personal behavior. We need to live our lives so that no one may point their finger at us and say because of that man I put no confidence in the salvation he says he has by faith in Jesus Christ.

RECONCILIATION AFFECT #5 – We have the responsibility to commend ourselves like Paul as a servant of God in everything and every way.
6:4-10

The word “commend” (συνιστημι) is one that means that Paul did his best to prove and establish and to show that he had experienced the grace of God in every possible way (*Ibid.*, p. 429). The phrase “servants of God” means Paul tried to establish by his life that he was a servant minister who had been called by God. **No matter what hit Paul, he always did his best to show that his lifestyle was consistent with his faith and calling.**

When we analyze the Greek text, there is a list that Paul puts together to describe his life and ministry in grace. It was not an easy life. The things Paul went through shows how much this world hates grace. Paul was the apostle for the Grace Age. He brought the brand new system of grace and all of its theology into existence (II Cor. 3:6). He did not win popularity contests for preaching truth about Jesus Christ and the grace of God. But he never wavered. He lived his life in ways that backed up his grace message.

What we read here are things that Paul literally went through and I guarantee that all of us here collectively have never gone through what Paul did. Paul proved himself as an ambassador for grace by certain realities in his life. H.A. Ironside said this is the standard for which every true minister for God should aim. As J. Vernon McGee said, there isn't one of us who meets these high standards. However, Paul met every one of them.

Now here is how Paul proved himself to be a real servant of God. He lists **26 realities** from his own life that characterized his ministry that proved his faithfulness to the grace ministry.

Reality #1 - Paul proved himself faithful in endurance . **6:4a**

The noun “endurance” is the only one used here in the singular and it is the only qualified noun “much endurance.” This is number one on the list because it is necessary to go forward for God. The Christian life is an endurance contest and it will take much endurance to get to the finish line. This will be a key Christian virtue that will be needed in, as John Chrysostom said, the “blizzard of trouble” that will face believers.

Reality #2 - Paul proved himself faithful in afflictions . **6:4b**

The word refers to things that put a believer in pressured and distressful situations (Smith, p. 207).

Reality #3 - Paul proved himself faithful in hardships . **6:4c**

Things you are forced into by necessity that causes pain. In the Christian life you will face different hardships (p. 28).

Reality #4 - Paul proved himself faithful in distresses . **6:4d**

This refers to things that cave in and put a believer in a tight spot that cause mental anguish (p. 417). If you live for the Lord and serve the Lord there are times when the noose will tighten and you will be boxed in by things that put a strain on your emotions.

When you think about it, most of us, generally speaking, have had a life of relative ease in our Christianity when we compare it to what Paul experienced.

Reality #5 - Paul proved himself faithful in beatings . **6:5a**

Paul was literally, physically beaten in Philippi and he mentions eight other times later in this book of II Corinthians (11:24-25). None of us here have probably ever experienced this.

Reality #6 - Paul proved himself faithful in imprisonments . **6:5b**

Paul spent quite a lot of time in jail for preaching grace. In fact, he said he spent far more time in jail than any of the other people he knew (II Cor. 11:23). Some have literally been locked up for their faith in Christ. Most of us have not.

Reality #7 - Paul proved himself faithful in tumults . **6:5c**

I love what one commentator said, riots occurred in almost every city Paul ever visited. There were times in Paul’s life when things were in such turmoil that mobs of people grabbed him. Even in Corinth, Paul had started a riot (Acts 18:12). Turmoil followed him everywhere he went. Believers will often find themselves in tumultuous things.

Reality #8 - Paul proved himself faithful in labors . **6:5d**

There are different Greek words that may be translated “labor” and the specific flare of this Greek word has to do with fatigue (p. 254). Paul literally kept working when he was physically fatigued.

Reality #9 - Paul proved himself faithful in sleeplessness . **6:5e**

Paul spent many a sleepless night in his ministry. In fact, probably many of those sleepless nights were spent praying.

Reality #10 - Paul proved himself faithful in hunger . **6:5f**

There were times Paul went to bed hungry. Not only did Paul lack sleep, he lacked food.

H.A. Ironside said one time he was ministering to some Brethren churches and they didn't pay him so he went three days and nights without money to buy any food. He kept right on preaching and ministering. He said someone finally slipped an envelope under his door with ten dollars in it and he went out and bought the biggest breakfast he could find and he said never did a breakfast taste so good.

Reality #11 - Paul proved himself faithful in purity . **6:6a**

Paul did not get involved in anything impure. He kept himself pure and moral in ministry. One of the key qualities of a believer must be purity and morality.

Reality #12 - Paul proved himself faithful in knowledge . **6:6b**

The emphasis of this word is that Paul was a thinking man, with a mind that was very knowledgeable and very discerning. He had head knowledge and he had heart knowledge. A minister must be knowledgeable of the Word and doctrines of God and he must be one who can think through various things. Some people seem to think that Christianity is about how you feel, but it is far more about how you think. If we are to be effective in reflecting grace, we need to be able to think with a sound mind.

Reality #13 - Paul proved himself faithful in patience . **6:6c**

Ministry requires patience, a lot of patience. God has a lot of patience to put up with us and we will need it to put up with other people. This word refers to a patient, forbearing and long-suffering attitude (p. 276). Murray Harris says this particular patience is demonstrated when you are forced to endure some injury or evil action (*II Corinthians*, p. 474). People will irritate you and in those moments we truly reflect grace when we patiently forbear with them.

Reality #14 - Paul proved himself faithful in kindness . **6:6d**

If we are to be effective ministers, we must be kind people. We need to demonstrate a kind spirit to people even, as one commentator said, when they don't deserve it. When we take a kind interest in others, we truly demonstrate grace.

Reality #15 - Paul proved himself faithful in the Holy Spirit . **6:6e**

God's Spirit needs to dominate a minister's life. It did dominate Paul's life. He did not grieve the Holy Spirit nor did he quench the Holy Spirit. He lived life yielding to the Holy Spirit.

Reality #16 - Paul proved himself faithful in genuine love . **6:6f**

The word "genuine" refers to a love that is not a phony or pretend love, but real agape love. What is needed is not pious love pretenders who tell you how much they love you; we need real people who really love in the context of truth.

Reality #17 - Paul proved himself faithful in the word of truth . **6:7a**

Paul was a man very skilled in the truth of the Word of God. The preacher must be one who knows the Bible.

Reality #18 - Paul proved himself faithful in the power of God. **6:7b**

A minister should be one who preaches by the power of God.

Reality #19 - Paul proved himself faithful through weapons of righteousness . **6:7c**

Paul was fond of military imagery and he had a weapon that demonstrated grace; it was the weapon of righteousness. Righteousness is a weapon. Weapons for the left hand and right hand means that everywhere Paul turned and on all sides, he was faithful to pursue and display Grace Age righteousness.

Reality #20 - Paul proved himself faithful in times of honor or dishonor . **6:8a**

We need to be faithful when honored and praised and when we aren't honored.

Reality #21 - Paul proved himself faithful when reports about him were evil or good . **6:8b**

We need to be faithful when people say good things and slanderous things.

Reality #22 - Paul proved himself to be true when some said he was a deceiver . **6:8c**

The word “true” means Paul proved himself to be truthful, honest and genuine when people alleged he was some deceiver.

Reality #23 - Paul proved himself faithful in places where known and unknown . **6:9a**

Reality #24 - Paul proved himself faithful in moments of death and moments of life . **6:9b**

Paul says I have been punished many times, but I am still alive.

Reality #25 - Paul proved himself faithful in moments of sorrow and moments of joy .
6:10a

Reality #26 - Paul proved himself faithful in moments of poverty . **6:10b**

Paul was physically poor most of the time, but he made people spiritually rich all of the time. If you looked at what Paul actually owned or possessed, it didn't appear to look impressive until you realized he possessed all things because he was properly related to God through grace and God owns and controls everything.

Paul knew he possessed all things.

Now why did Paul live life like this? So that he could prove the validity of the power of God that is found by faith in Jesus Christ. His grace message was one of no works and yet his life demonstrated his grace message was valid.